

STATE LEVEL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT OVERVIEW

In 1998, a state level interagency agreement was signed by the RI Department of Education, the RI Department of Health, the RI Department of Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Also signing were “supporting partners” including representatives of the RI Head Start Association, the Association of RI Administrators of Special Education (ARIASE), and the RI Head Start State Collaboration Grant. This Technical Assistance Guide is provided to support local implementation of both the spirit and letter of this agreement and the legal requirements on which it is based.

The agreement recognizes that the needs of children and families necessitate collaboration among education, Head Start and Early Intervention programs to assure quality, comprehensive, non-duplicative and continuous services. Such services are critical as children and families are either jointly served by two or more agencies or as they move from one agency to another. This need is reinforced by legal requirements which mandate local interagency agreements to clarify comparable and sometimes overlapping roles and responsibilities of these programs. The agreement does not add new requirements. Rather, it affirms the need for local collaboration based on existing legalities and, in particular, child and family needs. It supports efforts of local community agencies to coordinate and maximize resources as they collaborate to meet the needs of children and families. Finally, it commits the signing and supporting parties to this agreement to joint training and technical assistance to support local community collaborative efforts.

Legal Basis for the Agreement:

This agreement is required by federal statute and regulation as follows: (1) Federal requirements for interagency agreements found in regulations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parts B and C related to state agreements and (2) federal requirements for interagency agreements found in Head Start Program Performance Standards on Services for Children with Disabilities of 1993 related to local agreements and in Head Start Program Performance Standards of 1996 related to community partnerships. In addition, to federal Head Start requirements which mandate local agreements, the 1999 amendment to RIGL 16-7.1-2 requires that local school district strategic plans “include the development of interagency agreements for the coordination of services among state and local agencies responsible for service to children and families. These agreements shall address the identification and provision of services to preschool children with disabilities and children and youth with behavioral health care needs.”

Key Objective of Agreement:

To assure service continuity and facilitate collaboration among state and local programs serving young children ages birth through 5 years with disabilities and their families in a manner that will promote efficient and effective use of public resources and be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Children’s Cabinet State Child System Plan.

Agreement Purposes:

The agreement signatories and supporting parties believe interagency collaboration is beneficial to children and families and the agencies that serve them. They see the unique services and mandates of individual agencies not as a source of division but as diverse assets for maximizing community benefit as a

result of our working together. Consistent with this belief, through this agreement, the signatories and supporting parties intend to:

1. Affirm our common philosophy of children and families first and our commitment to (a) respect for the diversity of families; (b) families as integral partners in decisions regarding their children and our services; and (c) parents as their children's first and most important teachers.
2. Use joint training and technical assistance (TA) among the signatories and supporting parties to enhance and reinforce local partnerships among agencies characterized by open communication, an atmosphere of equality, and collaborative activities.
3. Facilitate early identification and appropriate services for children and their families;
4. Set the stage for collaborative local agreements related to fiscal issues and service delivery (e.g. referral, evaluation and services for eligible children and families);
5. Provide a mechanism for facilitating local compliance with legal mandates related to collaboration as delineated on the agreement cover sheet; and
6. Provide a framework for clarification of financial responsibility for services for children with disabilities.

Agreement Applicability

The agreement recognizes that state and local education, Early Head Start, Head Start and Early Intervention agencies each have unique roles and responsibilities. At the same time, they share similar mandates. They frequently serve the same children and families either through collaborative services or as children and families move from one agency to another. Examples are as follows:

Children and Families Served:

1. children with disabilities ages birth through 2 years and their families served under IDEA, Part C through Early Intervention services,
2. children ages birth through age 5 years and their families served through Head Start, and
3. children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years and their families served under IDEA, Part B through local school districts.

Common Points of Collaboration among the Agencies:

1. Between Early Head Start and Early Intervention services related to children with disabilities ages birth through 2 years and their families
2. Among Head Start, local school districts and other appropriate agencies related to
 - a. developmental screening for all children and

- b. the provision of a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years and their families
 - 3. Among Early Head Start, Head Start, Early Intervention services and local school districts as it relates to the transition of children (as appropriately referred or identified) and their families from one agency to another when the child is age eligible for such transitions to occur, e.g.,
 - a. at age 3 *from* Early Intervention or Early Head Start *to*
 - 1) local school districts or
 - 2) Head Start preschool services
- Note: Transition planning begins at 30 months for children serviced by Early Intervention
- b. as children and families move from one program to another within the 3 through 5 age range
 - 1) from local school districts to Head Start or
 - 2) from Head Start to local school districts

Collaboration Areas:

The agreement identifies the following twelve (12) “Common Areas Where Collaboration is Beneficial to Children, Families and Agencies Serving Them”. These twelve (12) collaboration areas serve as the framework for organization of this TA guide, that is, the sequence of topics that are addressed in the TA guide sections on legal requirements, options for collaboration and resources to support local communities.

- 1. Family involvement
- 2. Child Outreach / Child Find screening, referrals, and evaluations
- 3. Service eligibility (children and families served)
 - a. children with disabilities ages birth through 2 years and their families served under IDEA, Part C through Early Intervention services,
 - b. children ages birth through age 5 years and their families served through Early Head Start and Head Start, and
 - c. children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years and their families served under IDEA, Part B through local school districts.
- 4. Individual program planning
 - a. Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for children with disabilities ages Birth to 3 years and their families and

- b. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years
 - c. Other individualized plans as may be needed to plan for the needs of children and families referenced above.
- 5. Primary and related services as referenced under IDEA, Part B, IDEA, Part C, and Head Start Program Performance Standards (Provision of these services will be determined based on whether the child is eligible for such services and on the child's individual needs.)
 - 6. Service delivery in settings which, to the maximum extent possible, are in natural settings typical for the age of the child and which serve children with disabilities along with children without disabilities
 - 7. Resource sharing which may include, but not be limited to, facilities, materials and equipment, collaborative services, screening, etc.
 - 8. Transition
 - 9. Confidentiality
 - 10. Records transfer
 - 11. Joint staff training
 - 12. Sharing child count data as appropriate